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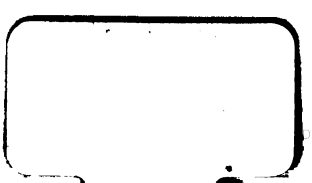

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UNDER A FOOL'S CAP

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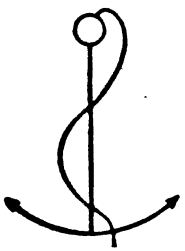
UNDER A FOOL'S CAP: SONGS

By Daniel Henry Holmes



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Olden friends, though dressed anew,
Goslings of that Dean of Mothers,
Trimmed and combed, — still, it is true,
Olden friends, though dressed anew;
Here I dedicate to you,
Oh my Sister-geese . . . and brothers!
Olden friends, though dressed anew,
Goslings of that Dean of Mothers!

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FOREWORD

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Her songs are only monotonous songs,
Dead of tune and of faded glories;
Her tales are worn with much telling, and gray
With dust of the years that have crumbled away
But ah! how the heart of her lover longs
For the olden songs and stories;

As, groping and halt, her voice totters along,
Half forgets and half remembers,
As the dear blind guide goes feeling her way
The dreary To-day is no longer To-day,
For his dead are alive again in the song,
And come out to him from the embers.

Ah! laugh who will, that he sits apart,
By the hour, this graybeard lover;
When a man has lived a lifelong through
In the newest song, there is nothing new,
And olden songs go best to the heart,
As Dame Darkness sings them over.

From **A Pedlar's Pack.**

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FOREWORD

ONE of the beatitudes of the book-lover is that unexpected association of ideas developed at the merely casual opening of a magazine or the pages, even, of a newspaper of the day. Sometimes it is a correspondent out of a quiet little town on the Canadian border, as in the present instance, who gives the first intimation which followed up leads on to fortunate discovery. Those of us familiar with Aldrich's exquisitely etched lyric will recall the chance turning of a spade which revealed what earth had held for centuries, whereof the final word is this:

"O nameless brother! see how Time,
Your gracious handiwork has guarded:
See how your loving, patient art
Has come, at last, to be rewarded.

Who would not suffer slights of men,
And pangs of hopeless passion also,
To have his carven agate-stone
On such a bosom rise and fall so!"

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True, our "find" was not a little helmeted Minerva but it *was* "a jewel fresh as any blossom," and similes should never be pressed too far! In Mr. Norman Roe's article we seemed, however, to reclaim some portion of poignantly remembered youth — "the past came back with all its old persistence." Later on, when the book reached us from London, our shadowy presentiment was amply fulfilled. Once upon a time we *had* seen the volume,— once upon a time possessed it, — but we were still in the dark as to author and place of publication. Finally, to make a long story short, our good friend, Mr. Davis L. James of Cincinnati, Ohio, — a bookseller both of the old school and of the new, — supplied the connecting link in what was at best a slender chain of bibliographic ratiocination. Mr. James not only procured a second copy of the rare little volume but gave definite information as to its origin and authorship.

From facts thus derived and other reliable sources we now know that Daniel Henry

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Holmes, Junior, born July 16, 1851, in New York City, was the author of *Under a Fool's Cap*. During his father's lifetime he whimsically called himself Daniel Henry Junior Holmes and still further complicated our means of identification when, in 1884, he signed his verses "Daniel Henry, Jun." On the mother's side there was English blood which may account for the issue of this first book in London. In 1856, Daniel Henry Holmes, Senior, who sympathized warmly with the South, took his family abroad and educated the children in France. Eight years in Tours and four years at the Lycée Bonaparte in Paris brought "Junior" to the age of sixteen when he was sent to Manchester, England, to be trained for a mercantile career. The life of a merchant, however, was soon given up. The next year another attempt was made to have him enter his father's business in New Orleans. He finally decided against commercialism in any shape and went to Cincinnati to study law which, after his graduation when

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twenty-one, he practiced in a desultory way for some considerable time.

In 1891, Mr. Holmes visited Europe, spending more of his time abroad than in America, and pursuing his own special studies in Greek, Latin, Italian, counterpoint and harmony. Returning, in 1904, to Holmesdale, the family residence, just across the river in Covington, Kentucky, near Cincinnati, yet south of the Mason and Dixon line, his last years were given up to arranging a large and carefully chosen library, composing music, and writing as the mood of composition came to him. The poet's life as indicated by these outlines was one of continued ease, and in the happiest of households, surrounded by his family and by intimate and devoted friends, he came to that great mystery which lies in wait for all. His death occurred suddenly at Hot Springs, Virginia, December 14, 1908.

As a cultivated musician and a collector of things beautiful his associates remember him. It is safe to assume that the hospitality of this

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southern gentleman was most charming. Indeed, from every side the personality of Daniel Henry Holmes proves a fascinating one. His keen sense of humour, his odd fancies and very real interest in other lives that touched his own, made him an unrivalled companion. Possessed of all that went to the making of a successful career, what else shall we say save that for those he left behind not one of them all can ever forget the man or the poet in the man. In later years, writing comparatively little as authorship is measured nowadays, but an incessant reader, finding joy as we may believe that comes of calm, do we not possess all that need be set forth concerning the author of *Under a Fool's Cap*? His outlook upon life at this period could be summed up in a quatrain which himself and not another might have written in some still hour of introspection:

> "*From quiet home and first beginning*
> *Out to the undiscovered ends,*
> *There's nothing worth the wear of winning*
> *But laughter, and the love of friends.*"

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One vital point of interest should be restated: the man who took these old tags of nursery rhymes and fashioned out of them some of the tenderest lyrics ever written was an American by birth and in the doing of this unique thing did it perfectly. That he never repeated these first fine careless raptures is nothing to his discredit. That he *did* accomplish what he set himself to do with an originality and a proper regard to the quality of his work rather than its quantity is the essential fact; and in his ability to touch a vibrating chord in the hearts of all who have come across these lyrics we feel that the mission of Daniel Henry Holmes was fulfilled both in letter and in spirit.

T. B. M.

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UNDER A FOOL'S CAP

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KING COLE

Old King Cole was a jolly old soul,
A jolly old soul was he:
He called for his pipe and he called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three.

HIS day was done, and the sands had run
Through the measuring glass so long,
That now there was left to his setting sun,
But a pipe, and a bowl, and a song.

But while the wine holds out to shine,
The pipe holds out to burn,
Why should a wise old graybeard pine?
A fond old dreamer yearn?

So, day growing dim, he filled to the brim
His pipe, and his bowl also,
And bade his fiddlers three play to him
The burdens of Long-ago,

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That their spell may lift, through the purple drift
Of the smoke, and the fire of the wine,
The long-dead Past in its burial-shift,
Like a ghost at a wizard's sign.

Then his fiddlers three made melody
So strange and potent of spell,
That the darkness grew as a peopled sea
With the shadows, once loved so well,

And the whole vast Yore uprose once more
On its world-wide phantom wings,
And drifted past, to the magic lore
That wept from the viol-strings.

First, the battle-field, where two armies reeled,
Under flashing and clashing of swords,
Then, the huge grim hall, where on lifted shield,
A boy-king was hailed by the Lords:

The postern gate, where he used to wait,
For the sweetheart — oftentimes —
Then the darkened church where she came in state
At the call of the wedding chimes.

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Every scene and place — every form and face —
Which the past in its glory had used,
Rolled on, in a pageant of stately pace,
Before King Cole, as he mused.

So the music sped, as the hours fell dead
In the ebb of the ghostly stream,
While the king sat wagging his wise white head
And smiled and sighed at his dream.

And there seemed to rise weird signals and cries
From the serried ranks and dim,
As though dumb throats and blinded eyes
Were beckoning to him.

At last the old sweet songs were told,
The ash in the pipe turned white,
The emptied beaker slipped from his hold,
And the dream sank back into night.

The fiddlers rose, and lay down their bows,
They knew they had played their last:
King Cole lay back, and his eyes were close,
He had followed after the Past.

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VIOLET'S BLUE

Violet 's blue — Diddle, diddle !
Lavender 's green,
When I am king — Diddle, diddle !
You shall be queen.

YOU shall have crown — Diddle, diddle !
Jewels and gold,
Damasks and lace — Diddle, diddle !
Centuries old.

Pages behind — Diddle, diddle !
Heralds before,
And all the state — Diddle, diddle !
Queens had of yore.

But when you 're queen — Diddle, diddle !
And I am king,
Will your eyes shine — Diddle, diddle !
Will my lips sing,

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As they do now — Diddle, diddle!
When we are still,
Poor county-folk — Diddle, diddle!
Plain Jack and Jill?

Can our hearts beat — Diddle, diddle!
Our love unfold,
Prisoned in pomp — Diddle, diddle!
Girdled with gold?

Love thrives alone — Diddle, diddle!
In open air;
Where pageants are — Diddle, diddle!
Love is not there.

Where skies are blue — Diddle, diddle!
And fields are green,
I will be king — Diddle, diddle!
You shall be queen.

Queen of Day-Dreams — Diddle, diddle!
King of No-lands,
With full-filled hearts — Diddle, diddle!
And empty hands.

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Let others king — Diddle, diddle!
And queen, who will:
We're better so — Diddle, diddle!
Plain Jack and Jill.

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WILLY WINKIE

Wee wee Willy Winkie,
Runs through the town,
Upstairs and downstairs
In his nightgown,
Tapping at the window,
Peeping at the lock:—
"Are all the babies gone to bed?
It 's gone ten o'clock!"

THEN when noises all are still,
Lamps all burn low,
Bolted doors and windows creak,
Open — and tiptoe,
With his lanthorn and his staff,
Grimly night-gowned,
Like a watchman of the Night
Winkie goes his round.

For of all the Angel guard,
Time out of mind,
He it is hath had in charge
All Baby-kind,

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From the mud-lark, fast asleep
On bare curbstone,
To the puppet, plump and pink,
Heir to the throne.

So when steeple clocks have tolled
Sleep-time at hand,
When mammas and nurses rub
Eyes full of sand:
Silver rattles all are hushed,
Pink lids all furled,
Winkie comes to oversee
His little world.

Ay! but there is much to do
For boys and girls:
Wee bald heads to trim with floss,
Empty mouths with pearls,
Little pudding legs to mould
Into human shapes;
General repairs besides:
Scratches and scrapes.

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There is much to teach likewise
To girls and boys,
How to caterwaul for pins,
And crow for toys,
How to clutch at pleasant beards
Coming too close,
How to neatly cram the mouth
With fists and toes.

Then reports to be received
From baby friends,
Litter'd all about the place
In odds and ends,
Rattles, rings and rag-dolls
Cast on the shelves,
Shoes and socks, that sulk because
Left to themselves.

Then if he make up his mind
From what they tell,
Baby, where its lines have fall'n,
Is n't faring well.

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Presto! Wee wee Winkie
Bends o'er the bed,
Picks up Baby, and away! . . . .
Some think it dead:

But the sly old watchman
Winkie knows best,
He has made for some bleak home
With no baby bless'd,
There he lays his charge to sleep,
And with the morn,
There is much to-do about
Baby, New-born.

Upstairs and down, he goes
In his night-gown,
Till the Day comes peeping
Into the town;
Then he throws all shutters wide,
Lets down the bars. . . .
Goodnight, Watchman! Off he flies
To blow out the stars.

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BELL HORSES

Bell horses, bell horses,
What time of day?
— One o'clock! Two o'clock!
Three! and away.

I SHALL wait by the gate
To see you pass,
Closely press'd, three abreast,
Clanking with brass:

With your smart red mail-cart
Hard at your heels,
Scarlet ground, fleck'd around
With the Queen's seals.

Up the hills, down the hills,
Till the cart shrink
To a faint dab of paint
On the sky-brink,

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Never stop till you drop
On to the town,
Bearing great news of state
To Lords and Crown.

And down deep in the keep
Of your mail-cart,
There 's a note that I wrote
To my sweetheart.

I had no words that glow,
No penman's skill,
And high-born maids would scorn
Spelling so ill;

But what if it be stiff
Of hand and thought,
And ink-blots mark the spots
Where kisses caught,

He will read without heed
Of phrases' worth,
That I love him above
All things on earth.

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I must wait here, till late
Past Evensong,
Ere you come tearing home —
Days are so long! —

But I 'll watch, till I catch
Your bells chime clear . . . .
If you 'll bring *me* something? —
Won't you please, dear?

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MY LADY'S GARDEN

How does my Lady's garden grow?
How does my Lady's garden grow?
With silver bells, and cockle-shells,
And pretty girls all in a row.

ALL fresh and fair, as the spring is fair,
And wholly unconscious they are so fair,
With eyes as deep as the wells of sleep,
And mouths as fragrant as sweet June air.

They all have crowns and all have wings,
Pale silver crowns and faint green wings,
And each has a wand within her hand,
And raiment about her that cleaves and clings.

But what have my Lady's girls to do?
What maiden toil or spinning to do?
They swing and sway the live-long day
While beams and dreams shift to and fro.

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And are so still that one forgets,
So calm and restful, one forgets
To think it strange they never change,
Mistaking them for Margarets.

But when night comes and Earth is dumb,
When her face is veil'd, and her voice is dumb,
The pretty girls rouse from their summer drowze,
For the time of their magic toil has come.

They deck themselves in their bells and shells,
Their silver bells and their cockle-shells,
Like pilgrim elves, they deck themselves
And chaunting Runic hymns and spells,

They spread their faint green wings abroad,
Their wings and clinging robes abroad,
And upward through the pathless blue
They soar, like incense smoke, to God,

Who gives them crystal dreams to hold,
And snow-white hopes and thoughts to hold,
And laughter spun of beams of the sun,
And tears that shine like molten gold.

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And when their hands can hold no more,
Their chaliced hands can hold no more,
And when their bells, and cockle-shells,
With holy gifts are brimming o'er,

With swift glad wings they cleave the deep,
As shafts of starlight cleave the deep,
Through Space and Night they take their flight
To where my Lady lies asleep;

And there, they coil above her bed, —
A fairy crown above her bed —
While from their hands, like sifted sands,
Falls their harvest winnowèd.

And this is why my Lady grows,
My own sweet Lady daily grows,
In sorcery such, that at her touch,
Sweet laughter blossoms and songs unclose.

And this is what the pretty girls do,
This is the toil appointed to do,
With silver bells, and cockle-shells,
Like Margarets all in a row.

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BURNIE BEE

Burnie Bee! Burnie Bee!
Tell me when will your wedding be?
If it be to-morrow day
Take your wings and fly away.

GO prepare your honey-home
For the wedding feast to come,
If you needs must work: I say
Take your wings and fly away.

Let your quest be what it will,
Be it love, or labour still,
Get you hence, while yet you may,
Take your wings and fly away.

Do you see these listless flowers
Dancing through the shining hours
In a gracefully rhythmic play?
Take your wings and fly away.

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In their robes of gorgeous hues,
From sharp reds to mellow blues,
Like a ravell'd rainbow's spray?
Take your wings and fly away.

With their girdled breasts of gold,
And the jewels manifold
Of their dancing-girl's array?
Take your wings and fly away.

Fair are they beyond compare,
Yet withal they are so fair,
Death is not more dread than they!
Take your wings and fly away.

In their wanton wealth of dyes,
In their perfume-sated eyes,
Strange spells sleep, and philtres stay;
Take your wings and fly away.

He who ventures close to them,
Though he touch but to the hem
Of their garments as they sway —
Take your wings and fly away.

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He will suddenly grow fain,
Fever with a nameless pain,
That no physic can allay, —
Take your wings and fly away.

All things fair will pall on him,
All but their lithe stems grow dim,
All but their buds pale and gray, —
Take your wings and fly away.

And his soul — fire-crown'd and shod —
Will go sorrowing like a God
Fallen from the stars astray —
Take your wings and fly away.

For these are the poison-flowers,
Foster'd by the Demon-Powers:
Art and Song, for Man's decay!
Take your wings and fly away.

Those who know them, not again
Shall they be as other men,
Though they travail, though they pray,
Take your wings and fly away.

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But shall bear the cursed gift,
Without respite, without shift,
Till they sleep beneath the clay,
Take your wings and fly away.

Burnie Bee! Burnie Bee!
By your love, your bride to be,
Listen to me, and obey:
Take your wings and fly away.

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DAFFY-DOWN-DILLY

Daffy-down-dilly has come up to town,
In her green petticoat and yellow gown.

FROM the far-away South,
Where endless Summer sleeps endless dreams,
With her eyes and hair full of loose sunbeams,
And a kiss on her mouth;

And lo! she stands in the market-place,
In the broil and babble, the trouble and chase
Of all trades and degrees,
— A poet's dream of the Bayadère —
With her naked arms, and slender legs bare
Up to the knees.

The town is dreary, the town is dead,
A pall of smoke coils about its head,
And the day drags by,
With pinch'd wan features and sullen trudge,
A hopeless day, like a worn-out drudge
That is trying to die.

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Folk pass beside her, standing there,
In their daily rounds, too cheerless to care
For the child of Chance,
Till Daffy-down-dilly suddenly trips
Her tambourine over her finger-tips
And begins to dance.

Oh! that dance! the dance of the Fauns of old!
The swell and swerve, as the muscles unfold,
Then the measures warm,
As the limbs go mad, the pulses sting,
Till the very soul spreads fiery wing,
Astride the storm.

About her the people come, by degrees
Uncertain at first, then ill at ease,
As the spell of her spreads,
Till a sunbeam strikes like a sabre-flash,
And turns to fire and gold the trash
Of her gypsy-shreds.

And then, her witchery reigns supreme:
The streets flash white, the houses gleam
While in maddening whirl,

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From end to end of the market-place
A frenzied chorus of dance keeps pace
With the dancing-girl.

And it seems as though Almighty Pan
Had sudden blown in the nostrils of man
His fiery breath of laughter:
So Daffy-down-dilly came up to town,
In her green petticoat and yellow gown,
And April came after.

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COCK-A-DOODLE-DO

Cock-a-doodle-do!
My dame has lost her shoe,
My master 's lost his fiddle-stick,
And don't know what to do.

THE red-eyed street-lamps glow,
Like embers burning low,
And ghastly dawn is breaking, thick
With silence and falling snow.

For miles and miles ahead,
The streets, untrodden, spread,
Bescatter'd as with ashes, for
The Carnival is dead.

Vague shadows, blurred of form,
Hugg'd close, to keep them warm,
With nodding heads and gait footsore,
Go trudging through the storm.

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Some, bundled to the nose
In furs, and some half-froze
Beneath their flimsy masquing-weeds
And shivering silken hose;

By twos and threes, and some
In single file, they come:
A broken string of motley beads,
All tangled out of plumb,

All sorts of crosses and kins:
Monks, monkeys, mandarins,
Limp pantaloons, and towzled clowns,
And batter'd harlequins,

Tame goblins, sleepy sprites,
Glum ladies, rueful knights,
Pale slender angels in drabbled gowns,
Plump devils in ravell'd tights:

All races, and creeds, and climes,
All costumes, masques, and mimes,
In a broil of colour, untuned and unkey'd,
Like the jingle of crazy chimes.

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And, arm in arm, God wot!
The sorriest of the lot,
My master, as an old Volkslied,
My dame, as a Gavotte.

He, smock'd in brindle pelt,
Cross-thong'd at legs with felt,
With leathern hood, sharp'd to a peak,
And cow-bells at his belt;

And she, all lace and gilt,
O'er her bodice of damask quilt,
While her red-clock'd stockings hide and seek
Through the slits of her velvet kilt.

But alas for their quips and pranks!
Against his lagging shanks,
His fiddle, widow'd of its bow,
Melancholically clanks,

And she drags at his sleeve,
Too sleepy to perceive
That, somewhere in the slush and snow,
Her slipper took French leave.

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Poor Carnival! God speed!
None mourn thee now, none heed:
When Song goes dumb, and Dance grows numb,
It 's fasting-time indeed.

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HIGH-DIDDLE-DIDDLE

High-diddle-diddle!
The cat play'd the fiddle,
The cow jump'd over the moon,
The little dog laugh'd
To see such craft,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

AND there never had been
Such a mummery seen
In the batter'd old circus tent,
As there came then about,
When the lights were put out,
And the rush of the audience was spent.

The full cast of the troupe,
From the star to the "supe"
The Clown-Dish and the Song-and-dance-Spoon,
A trim hussy as Cat
In jack-boots and cock'd-hat,
And the red-headed maid of the Moon.

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The whole gang of them dress'd
In their maddest and best,
Hand in hand went careering around
The professional ring
Where a fire beat wing
Like a monster bird struck to the ground;

While in stately masque,
On an upended cask,
Sat old Pantaloon, ruling the feast,
With his arm resting on
A huge black demijohn
Made to hold a Norse wassail at least.

And all this because,
Amid "storms of applause,"
Little Muggins had, for the first time,
Faced the dreaded lime-lights,
In corselet and tights,
As the "Prince" in the new pantomime.

Little Muggins? A chit
Upon whom they had hit
Hap-hazard, one night, on the road,

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And had carried along,
— As one picks up a song,
Just to lift the dead-weight off the load, —

Who had grown up, the child
Of them all, grown up wild
In a world which the big world ignores,
Yet lithe-limb'd, brown of flesh,
And as straight, strong, and fresh
As the world — the clean world, out-o'-doors.

And now the new Star,
Who will blaze near and far,
On poster and bill through the town,
In the plush and the plume
Of her Prince's costume,
In the pride of her fledgling renown,

Drawn up to full height:
In the leaping fire-light
One scarlet from tiptoe to throat,
Yet ashamed, in a way,
For one shy hand will stray
In search of the miss'd petticoat.

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Well may they rejoice,
Make exceeding great noise,
Drain the demijohn dry to her fame,
For in years that have been,
Never fairer young Queen
Came to rule the cloud-realms of *Bohème.*

Digitized by Google

THE BEGGARS COME TO TOWN

Hark! Hark! the dogs do bark;
The beggars are coming to town,
Some in rags, and some in tags,
And some in velvet gown.

IN tatters and trash, with clatter and crash
Of cymbals and trumpets and drums,
The mad cohort of the Miracles-Court,
A pageant of the slums.

Filchers and tramps, cripples and scamps,
The halt and the lame and the blind,
A motley crew, with a comet-cue
Of slatterns and brats behind.

Nimble Joes in yellow hose,
Blue giants and purple dwarfs,
Slender lads in crimson plaids,
And lassies with silver scarfs,

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The gypsy scold in cloth of gold
  As black and gnarl'd as Sin,
The pretty slut with nothing but
  Her shift to hide her skin;

And in the core of the mad uproar
  Like a lily, blossoming,
A beggar maid, yet one array'd
  Past the glory of a king,

In her tatter'd cloud of a bridal shroud,
  And patches of white Samite,
With her brown legs bare, her thick black hair,
  And eyes of midsummer night.

No jewels deck the lithe young neck,
  Her brows are ungirt with gold,
And yet is there not one more fair
  In all the king's household.

Well might so be, for this is she
  For whom Cophetua pines,
Nor finds he grace in court or chase,
  Nor solace in festal wines,

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Since first she came in beautiful shame
To kneel before his throne . . .
It seemed that earth held nothing worth
A king — save her alone.

And now they come, all Beggardom
In its glory gathering
From far and wide, to feast the bride
Elected by the king.

Let dogs go bark, and simples hark!
Sing hail! with a will and a way,
For the bride they bring to her lover-king,
This beggars' holiday.

Digitized by Google

BANBURY CROSS

ONCE on a time a fine Lady rode
Into the East, when the morning glowed,
With silver bells at her saddle-cloth,
And her finger aflash with the ring of troth.

Into the East, where the morning sings
While the sea lies sunning her silver wings,
And the sunbeams dance thro' Banbury town
Fallen asleep on the gold sea down.

Ah! but it was a pleasure to see
The ride of this Lady of high degree,
Gems round her girdle, gold over her lap,
And crimson cock-feathers to plume her cap.

Maidens of honour, in silken attire —
Each pink maid shadow'd by scarlet squire —
Helmeted knights and velveted clowns,
Heralds with trumpets and pages with crowns.

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Fair as Day, when the year is young,
And blythe as the laugh on a linnet's tongue,
Went she, red-rose with the joy to come,
For her lord and lover is coming home!

Home from his quest to the Holy Shrine,
Through the blood and fire of far Palestine,
Home to the lady who longs for him
With heart grown hungry and eyes grown dim.

On through the opening heart of the Spring
The lady went, with her plighting-ring,
Till against the film of the purple hills
Struck sharp old Banbury's gray bastilles.

Lo! as they rode into Banbury town,
A pilgrim lay in his russet gown,
Like a dog that is let to die in the street—
And this was the lover she rode to meet.

Thro' the wax and wane of the changing years,
A lady rides with wailing and tears,
A rich-clad lady—a lady mad—
Singing a song that is wondrous sad:

Digitized by Google

"Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross,
To see a fine Lady ride on a gray horse,
Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,
And she shall have music wherever she goes."

Digitized by Google

BOBBY SHAFTO

Bobby Shafto 's gone to sea: —
Silver buckles on his knee —
He 'll come back and marry me,
Pretty Bobby Shafto!

WITH his treasures won at sea,
Spanish gold and Portugee,
And his heart, still fast to me
Pretty Bobby Shafto!

In a captain's pomp and pride,
With a gold sword at his side,
He 'll come back to claim his bride,
Pretty Bobby Shafto!

So she sang, the winter long,
Till the sun came, golden-strong,
And the blue-birds caught her song:
All of Bobby Shafto.

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Days went by, and Autumn came,
Eyes grew dim, and feet went lame,
But the song, it was the same,
All of Bobby Shafto.

Never came across the sea,
Silver buckles on his knee,
Bobby to his bride-to-be,
Fickle Bobby Shafto!

For where midnight never dies,
In the Storm-King's caves of ice,
Stiff and stark, poor Bobby lies —
Heigho! Bobby Shafto.

Digitized by Google

LITTLE BLUE BETTY

Little Blue Betty lived in a lane,
She sold good ale to gentlemen.
Gentlemen came every day,
And little Blue Betty happ'd away.

A RARE old tavern, this "Hand and Glove,"
That little Blue Betty was mistress of;
But rarer still than its far-famed taps
Were Betty's trim ankles and dainty caps.

So gentlemen came every day —
As much for the caps as the ale they say —
And call'd for their pots, and her mug to boot:
If it better'd their thirst they were welcome to 't;

For Betty, with none of those foolish qualms
Which come of inordinate singing of psalms,
Thought kissing a practice both hearty and hale,
To freshen the lips and smarten the ale.

Digitized by Google

So gallants came, by the dozen and score,
To sit on the bench by the trellised door,
From the full high noon till the shades grew long,
With their pots of ale, and snatches of song,

While little Blue Betty, in shortest of skirts,
And whitest of caps, and bluest of shirts,
Went hopping away, rattling pots and pence,
Getting kiss'd now and then as pleased Providence.

How well I remember! I used to sit down
By the door, with Byronic, elaborate frown
Staring hard at her, as she whisk'd about me, —
Being jéalous as only calf-lovers can be,

Till Betty would bring me my favourite mug,
Her lips all a-pucker, her shoulders a-shrug,
And wheedle and coax my young vanity back,
So I fancied myself the preferr'd of the pack.

Ah! the dear old times! I turn'd out of my way,
As I travell'd westward the other day,
For a ramble among those boy-haunts of mine,
And a friendly nod to the crazy old sign.

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The inn was gone — to make room, alas!
For a railroad buffet, all gilding and glass,
Where sat a proper young person in pink,
Selling ale———which I had n't the heart to drink.

Digitized by Google

TURN, CHEESES, TURN

Green cheese, yellow laces,
Up and down the market-places,
Turn, cheeses, turn!
Where the orange-lanterns mellow
Moonlight green to flossy yellow,
Where red torches burn,

IN bright scarves and white chemises,
In the frill'd and flouncy cheeses
Of the farthingale,
Turn the Spanish maids and ladies
On the seaward place of Cadiz
At the Virgen's sale.

Such a festival of colour
Were a thing unknown in duller
Northern climes of ours;
Whitest rose to purplest pansy,
All the tones that painters fancy,
Through the scale of flowers,

Digitized by Google

And against the mat of blossoms,
Scarlet lips and amber bosoms
Flit like tempest-lights,
Till the market's many tables
Seem a garden from the fables
Of Arabian nights.

'T is the night which priestly learning,
Knowing then all hearts are yearning,
All forms are fair,
Consecrates unto the Virgen,
For all hearts and lips to merge in
One perfumèd prayer.

And there is a superstition
That if Hope would have fruition,
Love-wish come to be,
One must turn and drop nine "cheeses:"
Three for the Father, three for Jesus,
For the Mother, three,

On this evening of St. Mary,
In the market annuary
Where all flower-kinds join,

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Then of garden-girl or grass-man,
Buy a spotless sprig of jasmine
With a virgen coin.

If this sprig with Aves laden,
Be presented to the Maiden,
In her chapel niche,
Love will come: in Knightly armour,
Or in Court-robes — as the charmer
Who may call it, wish.

This is why all maids and ladies,
On the seaward place of Cadiz,
Where red torches burn,
— Green cheese and yellow laces —
Up and down the market-places,
Turn cheeses, turn.

Digitized by Google

JUMPING JOAN

Mink! Mink! the old witch winks!
The fat begins to fry!
There is nobody home but Jumping Joan,
Jumping Joan and I.

IT 'S the time when ashen-gray hazes drape
All form, and deaden all glow,
The hour when the Earth strips off Harlequin's cape,
Before putting on domino;

When the cupboards and chairs which have stood
stiff and stark
In the kitchen, for long hours back,
Make use of the stillness and fast-coming dark,
To stretch out their legs and crack;

And here, when the pots and kettles all hush,
While the housewife has gone to milk,
From behind the charr'd logs that soften to plush,
And the embers that glossen to silk,

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With her towzled curls, her arms and legs bare,
In her old-fashioned smock and mob-cap,
Jumping Joan hops out of the dim hearth there,
And scrambles up into my lap.

And then she will talk:—— You would never believe
What a witch this Jumping Joan is!
What wonderful news she will manage to give,
What astonishing prophecies!

She will tell me the plan of to-morrow's fight,
My fight for the daily bread,
She will make me rehearse, till I get them right,
The things to be done then or said;

She will make odd finds in the nooks of my brain:
Some old memory gone astray —
The clue to some problem I work'd at in vain —
Or the rhyme which had dodged me all day;

She will bring good news, from the years to come,
Of the work which to-day seems ajar,
Or perhaps some love-worded message from
My dear little girl afar.

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Yet her ways are so quiet, her voice is so soft,
That no one can hear her but I;
Not even the long-ear'd brass pitchers aloft,
Or good neighbour Cricket hard-by.

And so in the darkening, my Joan and I sit,
Telling stories that never tire,
Till somebody comes, and the lamp is lit:
Then Hop! she jumps into the fire.

Digitized by Google

THE OLD WOMAN UNDER THE HILL

There was an old woman lived under the hill,
And if she 's not gone, she lives there still;
Baked apples she sold and cranberry pies,
And she 's the old woman who never told lies.

A QUEER little body, all shrivelled and brown,
In her earth-colour'd mantle and rain-colour'd gown,
Incessantly fumbling strange grasses and weeds,
Like a ricketty cricket, a-saying its beads.

In winter or summer, come shine or come rain,
When the bustles and beams into twilight wane,
To the top of her hill, one can see her climb,
To sit out her watch through the long night-time.

The neighbourhood gossips have strange tales to tell —
As they sit at their knitting and tongues waggle well

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Of the queer little crone who lived under the hill
When the grannies among them were hoppy-thumbs
still.

She was once, they say, a young lassie, as fair
As white-wing'd hawthorn in April air,
When under the hill — one fine evening — she met
A stranger, the strangest maid ever saw yet:

From his crown to his heels he was clad all in red,
And his hair like a flame on his shoulders was shed;
Not a word spake he, but clutching her hand,
Led her off through the darkness to Shadowland.

What befell her there no mortal can tell,
But it must have been things indescribable,
For when she return'd, at the last, alone,
Her beauty was dead, and her youth was gone.

They gather'd about her: she shook her head
— She had been through Hell — that was all she said
In answer to whens, and hows, and whys;
So they took her word, for she never told lies.

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And now, they say, when the sun goes down
This queer little woman, all shrivell'd and brown,
Turns into a beautiful lass, once more,
With gold-stranded hair and soft eyes as of yore,

And out of the hill in the stills and the gloams
Her beautiful fabulous lover comes,
In scarlet doublet and red silken hose,
To woo her again — till the Chanticleer crows.

And she, poor old crone, sits up on her hill
Through the long dreary night, till the dawn turns
chill,
And suffers in silence and patience alway,
In the hope that God will forgive, some day.

Digitized by Google

MY LITTLE WIFE

I had a little wife, the prettiest ever seen,
She wash'd all my dishes, and kept the house clean;
She baked me my bread, she brew'd me my ale,
She sat by the fire and told a fine tale.

THE tale of a time that is cloudless noon,
Made sweet with the smells of the ripening June,
Made tuneful with all the fresh voices of life —
The tale of our Honeymoon, little wife!

When we ramble alone through our dream of dreams
A tale that is rhythmed with the dance of sunbeams,
And set to the music of thrushes and brooks,
There is not such another in all fairy books.

I 've looked forward to this happy time many years,
In bright smiling dreams, ay, and sometimes through tears,
Though it has n't come yet, I am certain it will,
The dear same story thou tellest me still.

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It may be thy story will never come true
In this world, where the happenings of dreams are few;
No matter! we 'll wait till we 're under the sod,
There are other worlds after this, thank God!

When to each the other is all in all,
Let betide what will, let what can befall,
There are not sorrows enough on earth
To dull love's glamour, or cheapen its worth.

Meanwhile, we will live, and keep telling our tale,
Abiding its coming, though all else fail:
For all things that man can withhold or give
Must die, but our love is from God: it will live.

True face! which I never have look'd on in vain
When I wanted strength to be patient again,
Though thy lines grow dim, thy fresh colour dies,
And twilight has come in the dear, clear eyes,

Come sit down beside me, and tell me once more
The tale that has help'd me so often before.
I am sick of waiting, and hungry to laugh:
Come! tell it once more, little photograph!

Digitized by Google

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

BURN'D and bare, the sands are spread :
Fire implacable beats overhead,
Heavens like Hell, and beneath, there lies
An august head, with blind dreaming eyes.

Once on a time, was lifted higher
No kinglier head, from Carthage to Tyre,
No loftier stature the sun look'd on,
Not even Rhodes or Singing Memnon.

Æons sat on his huge calm brows,
As sparrows perch'd on the pitch of a house,
Tempests crouch'd at his foot, abash'd
Like fawning hounds by the master lash'd.

Far to the edge of the desert's girth
Stretch'd the shadow of him on the earth,
Cowering beneath like a thing afraid :
So was his fame on the vast world laid.

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Nations came from far-away lands,
Over the deep, and the waste of sands,
Kissing the footstool his huge feet trod
To hail him High, Everlasting God.

Now he lies prone — he is fallen! Great Pan,
God of Gods, very Lord of Man,
A shapeless litter of shatter'd rock
For newts and lizards to spit at and mock.

None now come to hail his fame,
His greatness is gone, forgotten his name.
Motionless, changeless, unbounded, untrod
The desert broods o'er the broken God.

While on so much of its base that stands
Worn by the tides of men's lips, and the sands,
This is inscribed, in a cockney's scrawl,
Last and bloodiest gibe of all:

Humpty-Dumpty sat on a Wall.

Digitized by Google

LITTLE BOY BLUE

Little Boy Blue! Come blow up your horn.
The sheep 's in the meadow, the cow 's in the corn.
Where is the little boy tending the sheep?
He 's under the haycock — fast asleep!

FAST asleep? with the sun noon high!
While the bread-getting moments go hurrying by,
Man and beast in the fields at work —
Does he think him alone privileged to shirk?

Tending the sheep! why, the veriest drone
Could do what little there is to be done:
Even that little 's too much, so it seems!
Plague on all idlers and dreamers of dreams!

Half a year's treasure, wrenched from the soil
By dogged strain of unceasing toil,
Wantonly wasted, trod down under heel,
To pay for the sleep of a young ne'er-do-weel!

Digitized by Google

Labourer! Labourer! think, ere you blame
How often his horn's silver melody came,
Staying your courage, when courage had flagg'd,
Lighting the dead heavy burden you dragg'd:

Where do you think he has found them grow,
These wonderful songs which have cheer'd you so?
Toil as you may, in the sweat of your brow,
You will find none such, where you delve and plough.

Farmer! consider, oh! you, who begrudge
That scant broken sleep of your hard-driven drudge,
All of us have not like tasks to fulfil,
There are other fields than your own to till!

He is of those who have ears to hear
A higher message than comes to your ear,
Eyes to see, back of Nature's blind mask,
The Great Face beckon to holier task.

He is of them who are called from the throng,
To work in the fields of immortal song,
Gleaning a harvest of golden grain,
Without which we labour and toil but in vain.

Digitized by Google

Somewhere, whither his dreams have led
Beyond the hills that purple ahead,
Fields are there to be harvested in
With the very bread of the soul to win.

Little Boy Blue! Go sleep out your sleep,
Though the cow's in the corn, in the meadow the sheep,
Better to lose a whole harvest of corn
Than the tidings born from thy lifted horn.

Digitized by Google

MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, AND JOHN

PHEW! that night! what a night it was!
Streets like glass — and the air wet gauze;
While round corners, half ice, half soot,
Pounced the wind, like some vicious brute.

As I pass'd, through the gusts and mists,
Somewhere — out of sight — fell the hour:
Twelve, from the chimes in the glum church-tower
Of the Four Evangelists.

It was late, and I was sore,
Hungry, sleepy, and cross as patch,
When I fancied, near the door,
Some one sang the olden catch:

Matthew! Mark! Luke, and John!
Guard the bed that I lie on;
One to watch and one to pray,
Two to bear my soul away!

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Was it fancy? No: it came,
Poor little squeak of tremulous song,
Quaking, quavering, stumbing alone,
Still a real voice, all the same.

Braced against the storm, I stood
For a time, to make more sure —
How the gusts stung! How they mewed!
Nick's own wind —— God save the poor!

Someone there, sure: after a lull,
There it came again — the dull,
Wailing prayer, when Hope is gone:
" Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John."

Where was Matthew? Ah! where Mark,
Luke, and John? Did they hear or care
That some poor soul wept its prayer
On their doorstep, in the dark?

What with preachers all ayelp,
Grinding chaff into barren grists,
There 's no spare time left for help
With the Four Evangelists.

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There was none to hear the call,
So I started — after all,
Man must help when saints grow nice:
Nasty work on stairs of ice!

Slipping, scrambling I groped my way,
Step by step, till I reached the door;
There curl'd close upon the floor
In her rags, a little girl lay.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
Did you know there was lying there
One who believed, poor little one,
Saints inclined their ears to prayer?

In my arms I picked her up,
Poor little frozen gutter-pup;
Carried her to the nearest hole —
Anywhere for soup and coal.

There we warm'd her, nursed her well,
I and a red-nosed barkeeper,
But the song was gone from her:
Gone, and whither? Who can tell?

Digitized by Google

Ah! the vile old lying catch!
Mark had pray'd but a lip-deep prayer,
Matthew had gone to sleep on watch,
Luke and John, had they been there?

Pshaw! why should I rail upon
Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John?
Who were bold enough to say
She had a soul, to bear away?

Digitized by Google

MARGERY DAW

See-Saw! Margery Daw!
Sold her bed to lie upon straw;
Was she not a dirty slut
To sell her bed, and lie in dirt?

AND yet perchance, were the circumstance
But known, of Margery's grim romance,
As sacred a veil might cover her then
As the pardon which fell on the Magdalen.

It 's a story told so often, so old,
So drearily common, so wearily cold:
A man's adventure, — a poor girl's fall —
And a sinless scapegoat born — that 's all.

She was simple and young, and the song was sung
With so sweet a voice, in so strange a tongue,
That she follow'd blindly the Devil-song
Till the ground gave way, and she lay headlong.

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And then: not a word, not a plea for her heard,
Not a hand held out to the one who had err'd,
Her Christian sisters foremost to condemn —
God pity the woman who falls before them!

They closed the door for evermore
On the contrite heart which repented sore,
And she stood alone, in the outer night,
To feed her baby as best she might.

So she sold her bed, for its daily bread,
The gown off her back, the shawl off her head,
Till her all lay piled on the pawner's shelf,
Then she clench'd her teeth and sold herself.

And so it came that Margery's name
Fell into a burden of Sorrow and Shame,
And Margery's face grew familiar in
The market-place where they trade in sin.

What use to dwell on this premature Hell?
Suffice it to say the child did well,
Till one night that Margery prowled the town,
Sickness was stalking, and struck her down.

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Her beauty pass'd, and she stood aghast
In the presence of want, and stripped, at the last,
Of all she had to be pawned or sold,
To keep her darling from hunger and cold.

So the baby pined, till Margery, blind
With hunger of fever, in body and mind,
At dusk, when Death seem'd close at hand,
Snatch'd a loaf of bread from a baker's stand.

Some Samaritan saw Margery Daw,
And lock'd her in gaol to lie upon straw:
Not a sparrow falls, they say — Oh well!
God was not looking when Margery fell.

With irons girt, in her felon's shirt,
Poor Margery lies in sorrow and dirt,
A gaunt, sullen woman untimely gray,
With the look of a wild beast, brought to bay.

See-saw! Margery Daw!
What a wise and bountiful thing, the Law!
It makes all smooth — for she 's out of her head,
And her brat is provided for. It 's dead.

Digitized by Google

CURLY-LOCKS

Curly-locks! Curly-locks! Wilt thou be mine?
Thou shalt not wash the dishes, nor yet feed the swine;
But sit on a cushion, and sew a fine seam,
And feed upon strawberries, sugar, and cream.

EVERY day can I see, from my window-seat,
The queer little cottage across the High-street,
With its roof, cocked over the round peep-hole
In a solemn frown, inexpressibly droll.

And there—through the cobwebs of climbing vine,
Like a quaint mediæval medallion-design—
The turned-up nose and dimpled young chin
Of Curly-locks, hard at work within.

Hard at work! From dawn to dark,
Her little hand travels its wearisome arc
From the patient lap, then back again,
In sameness of toil, that saddens like pain.

Digitized by Google

And yet, whenever she lifts her eyes,
Such a spell of youth in her swift glance lies,
That the lamp-posts wink her a rusty smile,
The steeple-clock cackles, in joy senile,

And a smother'd peal of laughter runs rife,
Through the bald old street's monotonous life:
The sun shines brightest, the breeze sings best,
In the sacred circle her eyes have bless'd;

And I fall to thinking, watching her sew —
This dear little girl I have grown to know
So well, that her hair with its loose sunbeams,
And her strange eyes haunt me, and sing with my
dreams —

To thinking of one who was wont to be
The shine and shadow of life to me,
Whose spirit still cleaves to me, beckoning on . . .
My darling, these many years dead and gone.

There was the self-same wonderful charm
In the turn of her neck, the trick of her arm,
The same magic look in the eyes of her
Which made all seasons seem Midsummer.

Digitized by Google

It 's childish perhaps — but I 'm growing old,
And this huge still house is so barren and cold,
And peoples so strangely at close of day,
With sounds of the dead, and smells of the clay,

That I long for Curly-locks, over the street,
Long for the patter of quick light feet,
The ring of her laughter about the place,
The touch of her hands, the shine of her face,

And my heart cries out, If she were but near,
If she could sit down by my arm-chair here,
I could close my eyes, and fancy then
My darling come home to the house again.

Curly-locks! Curly-locks! Wilt thou be mine?
Bring me thy laughter, thy sweet sunshine:
I am parch'd for love, oh! take pity on
A poor old woman, whose child is gone.

Digitized by Google

THE OLD MAN IN LEATHER

One misty moisty morning, when cloudy was the weather,
I chanced to meet an old man clothed all in leather;
He began to compliment, and I began to grin:
How do you do? and How do you do? And how do you
do? again.

A STRANGE old man! and strangely clad!
most strange his mode of greeting!
And yet I felt instinctively this was no strangers'
meeting:
There was a something once well known, this un-
known face behind,
As some old tune, the words of which have fallen
out of mind.

He walk'd in silence at my side until we reach'd
my gateway,
I turn'd in, paused to nod good-bye: he gravely
bow'd, and straightway

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Pass'd on before me to my room, threw wide the door, and took
A seat which fronts the old arm-chair in my favourite chimney-nook.

It had been human to resent his treating me so queerly;
And yet I felt nor wrath nor pique — a sort of wonder merely:
Where had I seen this face before? Why should he feel at home
In this, my room? Who was the man? Whence? Wherefore had he come?

I am not bless'd with many friends, I have nor wife, nor daughters,
Not even sunshine ever comes to cheer my bachelor quarters:
A poor old bookworm left alone in my sere and yellow leaf,
What have I worth the coming for, to lover, snob, or thief?

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Besides, this was no common face I saw in my new-comer,
But nobly lined: a face that read like a kingly page of Homer;
His suit was odd, yet rich withal — gold-figured black shagreen,
The very dress that Shakspere now, or Rabelais revels in.

So while I lean'd back in my chair, my puzzled fancy started
In search of clues, among the dust and drift of years departed,
As he sat silent, with cross'd hands, his eyes held fast to mine:
Grave eyes, that held a world of love, and pity almost divine.

Then from the deep beyond those eyes, that never closed or wander'd,
Rose slowly his identity before me, as I ponder'd;

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And though he lifted not a hand, and though he
spake no word,
With all my soul I knew him then, with every pulse
I heard.

This was the guide I followed once, in days long
unremember'd,
On land and sea, through solitudes and castles
many chamber'd,
Who taught my heart to blossom out, who taught
my lips to sing,
Who roused a sleeping god in me: my Prophet —
Poet — King.

He told of battles waged and won by deeds of
marvellous omen,
Of highest homage earn'd from men, and noblest
love from women
Of youth's most radiant promises and wildest
dreams fulfill'd,
Just as a child had pictured once, just as a fool
had will'd.

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No need was there to tell his name, no need to
speak his meaning,
I recognized him through the mists of ages inter-
vening,
This was the Ghost which in my dreams the
Future show'd to me:
Myself! that never was; alas, myself! that could
not be.

And now? the pity of it all! my hopes, and dreams,
and longings
The Future and its righting hand, the Past and all
its wrongings
Have left me naked at the last before this Face of
old,
To read it as it were a book, a story that is told.

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BAA! BAA! BLACK SHEEP

Baa! Baa! Black Sheep! Have you any wool?
Yes, that have I: three bags full:
One for my master, one for my dame,
One for the little boy who lives down the lane.

WOOL, that never rams nor ewes
Bleach'd in sunshine, washed in dews,
Wool that never, for maid or man,
Summer shore or Winter span.

But a fleece that unseen hands
Gathered in the Fairy lands,
From the clouds of shadowy sheep
In the starfields of the Deep;

Woven on the loom of night
Into scarves of scented light,
Of a woof more fair and frail
Than October's frosted veil.

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When the West is throbbing yet
With a memory of Sunset,
And coy Night attunes her lute,
Blind sweet bard whose lips are mute,

Then is set my time to come
From my kingdom of the gloam,
Bearing in my three bags full
Scarves that are spun of the marvel wool,

One for my master — lying prone,
Panting for the day's toil done,
Wet with sweat that halloweth —
One for my master, black as Death,

One for my dame, whose wan hands rest
Cross'd upon her holy breast
In its mother-fashion bare,
One for my dame, as white as Prayer;

One for my little boy, curled up tight,
As a flower-bud folds at night.
Silver scarf with golden seams,
Arabesqued with scarlet dreams.

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And if God but will it so,
In the morning when I go,
I may leave my scarves —— Ah! then
Peace at the last will be with men.

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EPILOGUE

WHEN I began this loose handful of rhymes
I had no other purpose than to vary
Thy solemn saws and sayings centenary
With fresher costumes and new pantomimes,
Dear Mother Goose! that, as in olden times,
So now, thou shouldst still be the bounteous fairy
Who brings rich gifts of mirth—a drone's vagary,
As one who sets a wording to the chimes;
But as the work went on, the purpose heighten'd,
—For verses, like the wind, blow where they list—
It is not thou who peerest through the mist
Of childish dreams, the graying years off-frighten'd
But one—a mother's face—with eyes love-lighten'd,
Who used to bend above me to be kiss'd.

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"UNDER A FOOL'S CAP"

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Reprinted from *The Cornhill Magazine* for August, 1909.

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"UNDER A FOOL'S CAP"

IN everybody's library, I suppose, there is a certain shelf — a cubby-hole — where certain books nestle. Not great books, epic or epoch-making, hallowed by time and hall-marked as standard, but little stray volumes, which have come there without letters of recommendation, without references, sometimes even without merit, but which one prizes, notwithstanding, more than all their fellows. Quite simple books they often are, and bearing on childhood — books that bring back, like the croon of an old song, some face, some place, some adventure of the earlier days:

'T is sometimes pleasant to rehearse,
  When twilight deepens out of day,
The tinkle of a tiny verse,
  That whiled the noontide hours away.

'T is sometimes pleasant to recall,
  The friends of yesterday, to-morrow,
But that 's a pleasure — if at all —
  That borders very close on sorrow.

So wrote J. K. Stephen, and, indeed, his own "Lapsus Calami," though more widely known than most of its shelf-mates, has an honoured place in my cubby-

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hole. But there is another book of verse which I value more than all the others. "Under a Fool's Cap" it is called — there are 139 pages of it, the author is Daniel Henry, junior, and it appears to have been published in 1884, by Kegan Paul, Trench & Co. There my knowledge of its history ends, and no bookseller has been able to secure another copy, but as nearly everyone browsing amongst my books seems sooner or later to single it out, it must have some charm of its own to others besides myself.

The idea and plan of the book are, I think, unique. The author has taken twenty-four old, familiar nursery rhymes, which are printed in black-letter type at the head of the poems relating to them, and he has turned them, and moulded them, and amplified them to his own ends, whilst always maintaining the metre of the original. Although far from being parodies — as a matter of fact, they are the very opposite — they might well have been written by an older, maturer J. K. S. There is the same lightness of touch, the same wistfulness, the same underlying melancholy. As Edmund Gosse once said of "Cranford," "there is a smile — with a sob in it."

Daniel Henry, junr., has three methods of dealing with his nursery rhymes; he either makes them the basis of a story, or he takes them as an allegory and gives the "modern instance," or he simply continues

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and amplifies them. The last method is, perhaps, the most effective and successful of all, "My Lady's Garden" being well-nigh perfect. First, in its black-letter type, comes the old twice-put question, with the old cryptic answer:

> How does my Lady's garden grow?
> How does my Lady's garden grow?
> With silver bells, and cockle-shells,
> And pretty girls all in a row.

And then we learn the task of my Lady's "girls;" how, during the long summer's day, they swing in the breeze like marguerites, and how, with night, comes the hour of their magic toil, when —

> They spread their faint green wings abroad,
> Their wings and clinging robes abroad,
> And upward through the pathless blue
> They soar, like incense smoke, to God,
>
> Who gives them crystal dreams to hold,
> And snow-white hopes and thoughts to hold,
> And laughter spun of beams of the sun,
> And tears that shine like molten gold.
>
> And when their hands can hold no more,
> Their chaliced hands can hold no more,
> And when their bells, and cockle-shells,
> With holy gifts are brimming o'er,

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> With swift glad wings they cleave the deep,
> As shafts of starlight cleave the deep,
> Through Space and Night they take their flight
> To where my Lady lies asleep;

And there the maidens coil in a fairy crown above her bed and sprinkle her with their gifts. And that is the task of the pretty girls with their silver bells and cockle-shells, who grow like marguerites, and that is how the garden grows, and that is how my Lady herself grows — grows in such sorcery that, at her touch, sweet laughter blossoms, and songs unclose.

The whole poem is one of exquisite fancy, and the thirteen verses of it are all beautifully wrought and without flaw. A dozen other poems follow in the same vein, each one woven from some little clues in the rhyme-text above it. We sit with King Cole, as he fills his pipe and goblet, and we listen to his fiddlers as they play to him the burdens of Long-ago. We follow him back to the great, grim hall where, on lifted shield, a child was hailed as king; to the postern gate where a lover kept his tryst; to the pageant where a maid became a queen. We follow him till the last of the songs is told, till the ash of his pipe is whitened, and the beaker drops from his grasp, and the dreams sink back, with old King Cole himself, into the night.

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We learn why Burnie Bee was warned, and why Bobby Shafto did not come back from the sea. We welcome Daffy-down-dilly when she brings April with her, and we would fain welcome Curly-locks, too. We are even introduced to Jumping Joan, and recognize her, with Mr. Daniel Henry as the Master of Ceremonies, for an old friend, though I must confess that, hitherto, she had always baffled me. I used to wonder if she was any relation to the Jump-to-Glory Jane of Mr. Meredith. The rhyme was always so mysterious and yet seemed to mean so much:

> Hink! Mink! the old witch winks!
> The fat begins to fry!
> There is nobody home but Jumping Joan,
> Jumping Joan and I.

And then Mr. Henry comes along, and peers behind the charred logs of my fire as they soften to plush, and gives a gentle call, and lo! out hops Jumping Joan and scrambles into my lap. And then what talks we have, and what old memories we gather in, and what odd nooks she finds in my brain! And her voice is so low, that no one but I can hear her. And now, in the darkening we sit, for all the world as if I had never forgotten her, till somebody comes with a lamp and then Hop! and she is back in the fire.

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Then, later, when the lamp too has burnt low, comes wee Willy Winkie, a strange visitor surely, for he is garbed in his night-gown and runs through the house, upstairs and down, without so much as saying, "By your leave!" But Willy Winkie is a busy little man and much-to-be-forgiven; there are little bald heads to trim, and little mouths to fill with pearls, and many general repairs besides. There are little pupils to be taught — how to crow for toys, for instance, and how to clutch at pleasant beards. And there are reports to be received from baby friends, and if, when he hears them, he learns that baby is n't faring well, Presto! Winkie just stoops down, picks up baby and away — some think it dead — but Winkie knows better. He has made for some bleak home, unblessed by any baby, and on the morrow there is much to-do about baby, newborn. So he runs, upstairs and down, till daylight comes, when he throws wide the shutters, and, with a "Goodnight, Watchman," flies off to blow out the stars.

We are taught, too, why cheeses must be turned and why Little Boy Blue must sleep out his sleep beneath the haycock, though the cow 's in the corn and the sheep 's in the meadow. For Little Boy Blue is a dreamer of dreams, and the slumber that caused such havoc in the grain is but a low price, after all, for the silver melody of his horn.

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The last of this group of poems is "Bell Horses." I had quite forgotten the old rhyme, till I met it again here:

> Bell horses, Bell horses,
> What time of day?
> — One o'clock! Two o'clock!
> Three! and away.

The verses to this are the simplest and most unpretentious in the whole volume, but there is a gallop to them, and a pretty old-fashioned sentiment as well. The Bell horses are taking the scarlet mail-cart to London, bearing, perhaps, great news of State,

> Up the hills, down the hills,
> Till the cart shrink
> To a faint dab of paint
> On the sky-brink.

But down in the keep of their mail-cart lies a tiny love-note, ill-spelt and badly written, stiff of hand and thought, with the kisses marked by ink-blots, a note which to-night a lover will read and understand, and to-morrow, perhaps will answer. Till then, till the chime of the Bell horses rings out again, the hours will pass but slowly.

Here Mr. Henry resigns his fancy's freedom, he no longer allows his pen to carry him where it listeth, but sets out to weave a definite story out of the rhyme

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before him. Up to now he has been as a child with a piece of quicksilver, taking his rhyme, breaking it into a thousand sparkling pieces, running it up and down the surface of his imagination with many a dart and cantrip of whimsical fancy, toying with it, spreading it, giving it rein, but always bringing it back in the end to the same illusive, fugitive little morsel he began with. Now he has sterner work. There are stories, aye, and tragedies too, lurking behind the innocent catches, and Mr. Henry sets out to tell them with all the fire of the "serious" Hood. My edition of Hood, I must explain, is in two volumes, "serious" and "comic" and the arbitrary partition occasionally shows unfortunate results, but none the less we know that Hood could be very grave and grim when he chose, and so can Mr. Henry. His poem on Margery Daw, for instance, is every bit as haunting as "The Bridge of Sighs" or "The Song of the Shirt:"

> See-Saw! Margery Daw!
> Sold her bed to lie upon straw;
> Was she not a dirty slut
> To sell her bed, and live in dirt?

There is the raw material, there is the question to be answered, and Mr. Henry answers it for us. Why did she sell her bed? Because Margery had been playing at see-saw on the tree of knowledge and she had fallen,

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and now there was another life to consider. So Margery not only sold her bed, but "the gown off her back, the shawl off her head," and thus she fed her brat.

> Till her all lay piled on the pawner's shelf,
> Then she clench'd her teeth and sold herself.

Poor Margery!

> Not a sparrow falls, they say — Oh well!
> God was not looking when Margery fell.

It is not a pretty poem, perhaps, any more than "The Song of the Shirt" is pretty, but, on the other hand, Margery Daw is not the daintiest of nursery rhymes. It will be noticed that, for once, the original metre is abandoned. There is a similar story in "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John" only the subject of it is a child-waif of the streets. But perhaps the best written poem in the book is "The Old Woman under the Hill." Once, we are told, she was beautiful, as beautiful as Marguerite, till the same fate befell her and the same wooer came to her and led her to Shadowland, where she lost both her youth and her beauty. And now she is just

> A queer little body, all shrivelled and brown,
> In her earth-colour'd mantle and rain-colour'd gown,
> Incessantly fumbling strange grasses and weeds,
> Like a ricketty cricket, a-saying its beads.

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And then there is the story of the Beggars who Came to Town, to hail King Cophetua and his bride; the story of the Cat and the Fiddle, and what befell them in the mummer's tent; and the story of the Fine Lady, who rode to Banbury Cross, and what she found there. Lastly, there is the story of Little Blue Betty — you know the rhyme —

> Little Blue Betty lived in a lane,
> She sold good ale to gentlemen.
> Gentlemen came every day,
> And little Blue Betty hopp'd away.

Well, Betty, so it appears, not only distributed ale to the gentlemen, but gave them all kisses as well,

> For Betty, with none of those foolish qualms
> Which come of inordinate singing of psalms,
> Thought kissing a practice both hearty and hale,
> To freshen the lips and smarten the ale.

So Mr. Daniel Henry, very junior then, used to sit by the door of the inn, jealous as only a calf-lover can be, a "Byronic, elaborate frown" on his face, till Betty brought him his favourite mug and wheedled back his young vanity. Perhaps it was to Betty that he wrote his first verses? But that was years ago, and when one day he returned to give a friendly nod to the old sign —

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The inn was gone — to make room, alas!
For a railroad buffet, all gilding and glass,
Where sat a proper young person in pink,
Selling ale ——— which I had n't the heart to drink.

The remaining rhymes are treated allegorically, the most striking of them being "Humpty-Dumpty" and "The Old Man in Leather." Humpty-Dumpty is no less a person than the Sphinx:

Æons sat on his huge calm brows,
As sparrows perch'd on the pitch of a house,
Tempests crouch'd at his foot, abash'd
Like fawning hounds by the master lash'd.

But now no nations come to hail him; his greatness has gone for ever.

While on so much of its base that stands
Worn by the tides of men's lips, and the sands,
This is inscribed, in a cockney's scrawl,
Last and bloodiest gibe of all:
Humpty-Dumpty sat on a Wall.

"The Old Man in Leather" is not only the longest but the subtlest poem in the whole collection. Even the rhyme that heads it has an esoteric flavour:

One misty moisty morning, when cloudy was the weather,
I chanced to meet an old man clothed all in leather;
He began to compliment, and I began to grin:
How do you do? and How do you do? And how do you do? again.

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A strange old man surely, but I think I have met him before. In "Nature's Vagabond," a cousin to the "Book of Paragot the Beloved," Mr. Cosmo Hamilton has given us Billy Rudd. Billy Rudd, it will be remembered, was going to write a great History, so he took a little cottage in the country, and bought ten mighty manuscript volumes, and on the first page of the first volume he wrote chapter one. But fishing and sleeping was easier work, so he fished and slept, and backed horses till money failed him, so that the History was never written. And "The Old Man in Leather" is just another calf-bound volume like "Billy Rudd's," the book of the plans and the dreams of our lives, with chapter one written in copperplate at the beginning, and the rest a desert of empty pages. And, sometimes, when the day is cloudy with us, he will jump out with his everlasting "How do you do?" till we put him away on the topmost shelf again.

That is the last of the nursery rhymes, and as I read them all again — I am sure that Daniel Henry, junr., would understand me — I think of an old bachelor, fingering some old toys, the flotsam and jetsam of a playroom. A rocking-horse, perhaps, or some tin soldiers or a box of bricks, forsaken years ago, but what a world of dreams went with them! What journeys were to be accomplished on the back of that horse! What fights were to be won at the head of

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those soldiers! What castles were to be built with that boxful of bricks!

Violet 's blue — Diddle, diddle!
Lavender 's green,
When I am king — Diddle, diddle!
You shall be queen.

In good truth, a smile — with a sob in it.

NORMAN ROE.

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I

UNDER A FOOL'S CAP / SONGS / BY / DANIEL HENRY, JUN. / LONDON / KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH AND CO. / MDCCCLXXXIIII.

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II

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HEMPEN HOME-SPUN / SONGS / BY / DANIEL HENRY HOLMES / [LATIN MOTTO] / THE / GEO. B. JENNINGS CO. / PUBLISHERS / 105–107 WEST 4TH ST. / CINCINNATI, OHIO / MCMVI.

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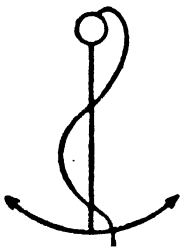

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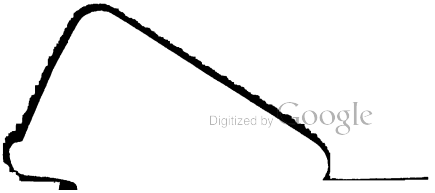

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